

NORTH AMERICAN

WETLANDS

CONSERVATION ACT

project flash

Georgia Partnership Receives \$42,000 for Wetlands Project

On June 9, 2004, the North American Wetlands Conservation Council reported to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission that it had approved **\$42,000** in funding under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act's Small Grants Program for the **Restoration of Myrtle Pond Project in Georgia's Glynn County in Congressional District 1**. The Act is nonregulatory and calls for voluntary partnerships to develop and implement wetlands and associated uplands conservation projects to benefit wildlife. Projects must meet certain biological criteria to be considered for funding, and partners must be able to match the grant request 1:1 with nonfederal funds.

Myrtle Pond is a 95-acre impoundment that lies on the north end of privately owned Little St. Simons Island, a 12,000-acre barrier island off Georgia's coast. The importance of this island to **Atlantic Flyway** birds has been recognized through its BirdLife International designation as an Important Bird Area. The delta and its associated habitats also have been named a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network site. Further, this area's importance to migratory birds has been noted by the South Atlantic Migratory Bird Initiative, whose goal is to conserve high-priority habitats in this region—the delta and its barrier islands are among them.

While Myrtle Pond continues to provide habitat for waterfowl and wading birds, it has been limited and reduced in value due to the growth and expansion of high-saline-tolerant vegetation. The purpose of this project is to return the pond to its brackish-water function to benefit waterfowl and other waterbirds. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources, in consultation with Ducks Unlimited, Inc., developed an Integrated Waterbird Management Plan (Plan) for the pond.

Project partner The Lodge on Little St. Simons Island (Lodge) will be responsible for project planning, management, and monitoring. Ducks Unlimited will provide biological, logistical, and engineering support. Partners will construct a rice trunk, repair existing rice trunks and dikes, build perimeter and cross ditches, install a generator to provide power to the existing wellhead, and manipulate pond water levels according to the Plan.

Some of the waterfowl species expected to benefit from the partners' work include green- and blue-winged teals, northern shoveler, mallard, American black duck, mottled duck, lesser scaup, and northern pintail. Other birds using the pond's habitat include species such as little blue and tricolored herons, reddish and great egrets, black and yellow rails, bald eagle, American and least bitterns, white and glossy ibises, and black- and yellow-crowned night-herons.

The Lodge, Ducks Unlimited, Coastal Barrier Island Foundation, and Georgia Department of Natural Resources will add **\$50,000** to the grant

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amount to achieve their project goals. Their activities also support the habitat conservation goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's **Atlantic Coast Joint Venture**.

For more information about this project, contact Duane Harris, The Lodge on Little St. Simons Island, seageorg@bellsouth.net, (912) 638-9430, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, keith_morehouse@fws.gov, (703) 358-1784.